



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Mustard Seed Schools, Busota, Kamuli

Director's Update by Moses Kamyá, June 2024



Our son, Dan Hurd, after speaking with O-level Entrepreneurship students

*Message to UHST supporters
from Moses Kamyá,
Mustard Seed Schools' Director...*

Dear UHST supporters and friends,

Mustard Seed Humanist Schools have faced serious challenges in recent years, the greatest of which has been Covid, which led to the prolonged closure of many schools in Uganda. We are very grateful to UHST supporters. It is your ongoing commitment to our school that has kept the candle of hope burning.

When many schools closed down forever, the support that UHST provided enabled our teachers to keep working and our students to continue their studies. As a result of your support, Mustard Seed School survived and our

students performed well in national examinations.

In the 2023 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) 7 Mustard Seed children gained a coveted Grade 1 and the whole cohort did well enough to progress to secondary school. 15 enrolled in our secondary section, 4 of whom were awarded full UHST scholarships.

In 2023 all our O-level candidates qualified to join A-level and other tertiary institutions. 27 scored the top Division 1 across 7 subjects, 42 were awarded a very creditable Division 2 while 61 scored division 3. We had no students gaining the lowest Division 4 or failing. 21 of the best students enrolled with us to pursue A-level studies. Others moved to other schools,

enrolled in vocational colleges, found jobs in the service or industrial sector and a few returned home to make a living as farmers.



O-level candidate Yusuf, with his proud parents



Yusuf's family home



Yusuf's family growing sweet potatoes

In the 2023 A-level results every one of our candidates passed with 2 principal passes, qualifying them to join universities and tertiary institutions of higher learning. The best in sciences scored 15 points out of the maximum 20 while the best in Arts scored 17 out of the 20 points. We were ranked 9th out of over 30 A-level schools in Kamuli district, while nationwide we were number 1335. This is a huge achievement for a school in an impoverished rural area.



Joan Mukisa, former Head Girl, inspires S5/S6 students with her experiences as a university Law student

Mustard Seed school has become a popular choice for local parents. While annual enrolment has grown, we have had to turn children away to prevent class sizes from becoming too large. At primary level we have a total of 166 children, 87 of whom are girls. At secondary we have 572 students, 252 of whom are girls. In our primary section we employ a team of 11 teachers and 5 non-teaching staff, while in the secondary section we have 26 teachers and 6 non-teaching staff. Interestingly, many of our teaching staff are former students who have returned because they support our school's Humanist ethos.

We really appreciate the long-term commitment of UHST supporters who fund bright, needy children on scholarships.



Meeting older UHST scholarship students

UHST scholarship money is sent to us in regular monthly payments and is a vital part of secondary school income. It makes a substantial contribution to paying staff salaries. The scholarships also boost school standards by bringing in a cohort of very bright children each year from the most challenging of backgrounds.

UHST does its best to ensure that we have the essential textbooks needed to deliver the new competency-based secondary curriculum. Our aim, as a Humanist school, is to foster a spirit of questioning and enquiry. We want to nurture independent-minded children who can find out answers for themselves, instead of solely relying on their teachers. Our Reading for Pleasure Programme aims to foster a love of reading, which we hope will stay with children throughout their adult lives. UHST with the Ethical Society of St Louis continues to provide free reusable sanitary pads (Afripads) lasting one year to all our girls of menstrual age both in primary and secondary. This increases girls' attendance in lessons and raises their academic performance to that of boys.

Funds from UHST also help us to improve infrastructure in our schools. Recently, UNEB, the national exam body, directed us to transfer the science and computer labs to the lower secondary school site, threatening to withdraw our exam centre. Using funding from UHST, we have been able to transform two classes at the playground site into computer and science labs to the satisfaction of UNEB. However, this is only a temporary fix, and we are expected to construct purpose-built computer and science labs as soon as funding allows.



Computer room before relocation to main site

The secondary boys' dormitory has been rehabilitated using UHST funding. We have also constructed a new kitchen with efficient wood-burning stoves.



New kitchen construction

Our schools continue to excel in games and sports. The secondary girls football team won the district trophy and competed in the regional tournament. Our netball and boys' volleyball teams are right now at the regional competitions having qualified at district level. The primary boys football team holds last year's trophy of the Southern division of Kamuli municipality. Later in the year Mustard Seed's scout troop will be hosting the annual camp and scouting competitions of the Kamuli District Scouts.



School hall with trees planted for shade

Our schools have close links with the community. Local families provide rooms to house our staff. They supply us with food and other small items like pancakes, chapati, sweet banana, sugar cane, cooked food, etc all of which are bought by the children. We held parents' meetings last term in both schools. Parents and the wider community are happy with our developments. Parents visit one day each term to interact with staff and check on their children's academic improvement.

Immediate priorities

Our main remaining priority at the primary school is to provide **playground equipment** for nursery and lower primary children to enhance their leisure and motor skills.

At the secondary school, transforming two classrooms into labs has reduced our classroom space. Students are having to study in temporary shelters. We want to avoid the need to use existing classrooms on the upper site as this will impose unaffordable extra staffing costs. We would gladly welcome assistance towards the construction of a new building which will house a **dedicated science laboratory, prep room and room for teaching computer studies**. This will cost in the region of £22,000.

I should like to end by thanking all UHST supporters. Without you, Mustard Seed Humanist School's mission of transforming humanity in the Busota area through education would not have been possible. We really appreciate your unstinted support.

If you feel you would like to help UHST to meet the essential needs of Mustard Seed and the other Humanist schools, please contact stevehurd@uhst.org (01782 750338).

Donation forms can be found at:

<https://ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/donate/>